

*Charlie Johnston*

HE SEES WITH HIS HANDS

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# He Sees with His Hands

## *The Story of Charlie Johnston— “Miracle Man” of Peekskill*

By  
**Elita Wilson**

UP around Peekskill and Mt. Kisco, N. Y., they call him “the miracle man”. But the black sign painted on the glass door of his little office down in the town of Peekskill informs you that he is Dr. C. R. Johnston, Chiropractor. Another little sign tells you to “walk in.” You do. And from then on you must brace yourself for a series of surprises.

Dr. Johnston has no assistant. He receives you himself; or if he is busy with a patient, you sit down and wait. At last the door of his office opens and he comes toward you, smiling. As he stretches out his hand in greeting, you get your first surprise in the grip of that hand. It's powerful—like the hand of an iron-weight lifter. It's gentle—like a woman's hand. And then you remember what it said at the top of his letter-head: “No Drugs—No Surgery—Only My Hands.” It is those hands and their remarkable healing power that have won for him the name of “the miracle man.”

You receive your next surprise—which is really more of a shock—when he begins to talk, and your eyes meet his. You wonder if he is ill at ease, that they shift their viewpoint so often. You wonder if perhaps he doesn't need glasses.



DR. JOHNSTON

He is explaining the theory of chiropractic, but suddenly he excuses himself and moves rather awkwardly to a dark closet. After fumbling about he comes back to you, a human spine dangling from a nickel ring that he holds in one hand. You forget Dr. Johnston for a moment to gasp at the grisly thing. Then you gasp again as he stumbles against something and smiles apologetically.

“I am blind, you see,” he explains simply.

When he was twenty-four years old Dr. Johnston was then plain Charlie Johnston, a vaudeville performer. He was tall, good-looking, and the possessor of a winning personality that makes an actor popular. He made a good living, too, and at an age when most young men out in the business world are struggling along, “learning the business,” Charlie Johnston was “sitting pretty”.

Then came a fall on an ice-coated pavement. Too much

haste. A turned ankle. An injured spine. And Charlie Johnston woke up eight days later to find himself totally blind and—as is the way with most theatrical folk—not a cent saved toward a rainy day.

“I guess you can imagine what a tragedy that was to a young man who had never known a sick day in his



life," he told me. "For a long time I wondered why God hadn't just let me die when I fell, and make it easier for everybody all around. But he didn't. Instead, he sent another blind man to me—a piano-tuner—who taught me his trade and assured me that as long as people played and bought pianos and had children around to bang on them, I wouldn't starve. And I didn't.

"For a while I was pretty contented, tuning folks' pianos and not being a burden. Fortunately I had always played by ear and had a good sense of tone, so when I wasn't tuning pianos I was playing on them. It was a great comfort to me to be able to pour out my disappointment and heartache thru my music. Somehow I found it impossible to open my heart to people. They were too sympathetic. They emphasized my misfortune.

"But soon I became restless, dissatisfied with the meagre living I made from tuning pianos, sensitive about my affliction and bristling whenever I thought people were giving me charity. It irked me, too, that I had to depend on another's eyes to guide me about my work. I wondered if I'd ever get to the point of tapping my cane on the sidewalk and going around alone.

"They say it never rains but it pours. That's true. But I say—the sun never shines so bright as just after a heavy downpour. At about the time I became so discouraged with things, my right hand and arm began to trouble me. At times I found them almost entirely useless. Nearly always there was pain in them. I had to stop my work. I wondered if, in addition to losing my sight, paralysis was going to cripple me. And again I wondered why God had let me live."

Charlie Johnston then went the way of all crippled and sick people. To this doctor and that doctor. Experimenting with electrical treatment. Then massage. And then pink pills and blue pills and bitter tasting medicines. Still the hand and arm refused to get well. As a last resort he went to a chiropractor. This is what he says happened:

"After a few adjustments the nerve supply to my arm was restored and nature did the rest. I threw away the pink and blue pills and dumped the bitter medicines down the sink and I gave my piano tuning kit to the blind man who had instructed me. Then I did something that even the chiropractor who cured me said I was foolish to do: I had a friend write a letter for me to the Palmer School of Chiropractic at Davenport, Iowa, applying for admission to the school."

Charlie Johnston's family and friends told him kindly, but positively, that it couldn't be done. How would he get out there? How could a blind man learn the text-books? Even if he did get thru the course what good would it do him? Nobody would place con-

fidence in a doctor who couldn't see them. But Charlie Johnston was a blind man grasping at a glimmer of light. Chiropractic is done entirely with the hands. You don't have to see. You couldn't see where the trouble was if you wanted to. A chiropractor must feel his way. If his sense of touch is good and his knowledge of his profession is well grounded he gets results. But he does not need his eyes. That was the way Johnston figured.

A few weeks later he received an answer from the Palmer School, telling him that he had been enrolled and to come on. He had a little money—very little—and he borrowed the rest on notes. He put himself in the hands of the Pullman conductor on the train, and a few days later he presented himself at the Palmer School—ready for work.

Such a thing had never happened before. The faculty was opposed to his staying. They had no facilities for teaching the blind. But there was Charlie Johnston, and there he intended to stay and learn. He insisted he had as much right to be a chiropractor as any other man. And he did stay—when Dr. Palmer himself heard the story.

So now when you call on Charlie Johnston—excuse me, Dr. Johnston—he guides you surely and proudly out into the reception room of his office and asks you to look at the report of his final examinations at the Palmer Institute. It's framed, and it hangs in a conspicuous place on the wall. You see only A's and A pluses—nothing lower! That's another surprise. He smiles at your astonishment.

How did he do it? "My roommate was good enough to read the lessons from the textbook aloud to me," he tells you. "He did this while he was studying, so we were able to study and discuss things together. In class I kept my ears open. Perhaps it is true that when a man loses one of his senses the others become more

keen. Anyway, I never missed a word and I believe I remembered and absorbed more simply because I had no pencil or notes to depend on."

If you doubt that people have confidence in a blind doctor, all you have to do is go and sit in his office during office hours and watch the stream of people that pass in and out. Ride around with him in his car while he makes calls all over the country and listen to the unstinted praise of "the miracle man". No, he doesn't drive his own car, of course, and he doesn't ask you to. He has a chauffeur, and the car is one of the best makes. So you can see he's making more than just a living.

They worship him—all those hundreds who come to him for help, and those others to whom he must go. Mothers, with tears in their eyes, will tell you how he saved their babies and children. There's one little boy in Peekskill, Harold Dore, (Continued on page 54)

# If I Can Help

By Lillian Fletcher

THE long trail, the lonely trail,  
Seems the way for me:  
The trail across the stormy heights,  
Far above the sea.

Up the steep and rugged path,  
Onward toward my goal:  
With head held high toward God's  
blue sky,  
A song within my soul.

What matters, then, an empty heart?  
Life will not be in vain,  
If I can help one wearied soul  
To rise, and climb again.



# He Sees With His Hands

(Continued from page 42)

who was almost totally blind when his father brought him to Dr. Johnston. Now his eyes are well and he goes to school and plays, just like the other children. There's a young mother who was all but committed to an insane asylum when her husband heard of Dr. Johnston. I saw her in her home, tending to her house and her babies—as normal as a woman could be. And if she hadn't asked me not to, I would tell you her name. Over in Mt. Kisco there is a woman, Mrs. Piersoll, who lay helpless in her bed for twelve years, a pitifully distorted victim of rheumatism. Not a muscle of her body could she move. For two years Dr. Johnston has been calling on her twice a week. Now she sits up in a wheel-chair, holds a book and sings the praises of the doctor to anyone who will listen to what she has to say.

I gathered from talking with those people and many others that he is beloved quite as much for his philosophy about life and sickness as for the amazing healing quality of his hands. You simply cannot hold a grudge or fail to smile when you're in his presence. He's made cripples walk. Made sick children well. Given faith to hopeless ones, and worked out his own salvation while doing it.

At last—after ten years of groping about in eternal night—he's found out why God didn't let him die. He's

needed. There is work for him to do here on earth. Work for his *hands*.

Dr. Johnston lives alone in his little apartment where he prepares his own meals and enjoys his radio in the evenings. Other nights he goes about among his friends, to their homes and parties, and they say he's the life of the party. He dances, too.

He supports his mother and father and even finds time for charity cases.

Hired help in Peekskill is hard to get and undependable. Even a blind man has found that out. So those times when he is left high and dry with nobody to clean his offices, he cleans them himself after office hours. When I called on him he hadn't had a maid for five days and to save my soul I couldn't find a thing out of order or a speck of dust around. Even the white woodwork was spotless, and the white gowns that he provides for his patients to wear during their treatments were immaculate.

As he was showing me around he stopped before a cabinet with glass doors, filled with discarded eye-glasses and crutches and braces. "Of course I'm not a miracle man," he said. "I just happen to be a good chiropractor. But I often wonder if I don't get results because I am blind and have a keener sense of touch."

When he had told his story we went over to the hotel for lunch. The waiters

all know him and he knows them. Even before they have spoken he will say: "Hello Joe," or Harry—or whoever it may be. He took my arm and led the way to the table, guided by the voice of the headwaiter and by that strange sixth sense that blind people possess.

No, he didn't order a sandwich, or anything else that a blind man could eat gracefully. As I remember it we had soup first, then creamed chicken and asparagus and coffee. And he helped himself to sugar and cream. And all during luncheon he entertained me with a conversation that was certainly entertaining. He didn't talk about himself and his work, but about affairs of the world, the plays he has been to see and the books that had been read to him when someone had the time to spare. "About the only thing I miss," he said, "is reading."

After lunch he escorted me to the station and waited on the platform until the train pulled in. My heart skipped a beat or two as I watched him from the car window, and saw him start uncertainly toward the tracks and then correct himself and walk over to his waiting car. And I won't ever forget the expression of honest joy in living that lighted up his face as he stood by his car and waved his hat at the departing train and the visitor he could not see.

# Ford and Trine

(Continued from page 18)

life—and that it works. It is to me one of the most significant facts of our time.

Instead of this upward-looking, and therefore *creative* attitude toward life, we get so into the habit of looking down, and fears and forebodings cripple our energies, defeat our plans and our work, and steal from us the very joy of living—the joy that should be the concomitant of the natural normal life, whose very existence depends upon a courageous outlook, habit and on-going.

MR. FORD: Well, anything that will give us courage and real help, is of value.

MR. TRINE: Instead of standing upright mentally and spiritually—and thru this physically—millions of men and women are under the spell, and in time the power, of *fear*, and the negation that it brings. In this way, and unconsciously, *we inhibit the Power* that naturally and normally works in and thru us—and therefore for us.

never slump—in mind, or spirit, or body—but will live courageously and therefore splendidly every day, and straight to the end. Jesus knew what he was talking about; and it is the biggest thing in life that we can know. This knowledge of the *reality* of the Life within us is undoubtedly what he had in mind when he said: "I am come that ye might have life and that ye might have it more abundantly."

I feel confident, moreover, that we shall some day find the real *scientific basis* for this finding and this fundamental of the Master; and this will help us to perceive the identity of what we term natural law and spiritual law. Our now rapidly increasing knowledge of the finer forces of life—both about us and within us—may bring this sooner than we think.

MR. FORD: As I have said, my belief is that Jesus was an old person, old in experience; and it was this that gave him his superior knowledge of life.

ing life is the fact of reincarnation; and it probably grows out of your belief that the purpose, perhaps the sole purpose of life here is "experience"—that we are here for experience, and that unless we get it now, we return and probably time and time again, until we get that which it is necessary for us to get. You have thought a great deal on this line; for somewhere you have said, as I recall it, substantially this: I believe that our conscious individuality will never be lost. No matter what plane of thought we may inhabit we shall be in full consciousness of our birthright of thinking, and by each experience we shall improve our character.

Has it come to you as to what probably occurs, or what the state is, when we leave the body here? And do you know I often think of that reported saying of the Master—"In my Father's house are many mansions." With his wonderful gift of clear-seeing, did he



ngly delightful. One hopes the author will live long enough to regret the venomous words he writes about Wilson; the strong probabilities are that history will in the end write a far different appraisal of this man than Mr. Pitkin has traced. Not only does he insist that Wilson's was a "mediocre mind", but a mediocre mind that "imagined itself a thing of quality and looked down upon most people." Surely Mr. Pitkin forgets something of the dignity to be expected in a teacher and author when he writes words like these with which he sums up the story of Wilson's bitter defeat at Versailles: "Not satisfied with defeat and flight, he lingered to eat dirt." And it is, to say the least, a matter of questionable taste for Pitkin to boast that he himself had on one occasion to coach students who had failed under Wilson's classroom regime. The author has already been severely criticised for mentioning a confidence about the late President concerning a physical weakness that caused him discomfort "from childhood to the day of his death." He should tell all about that—or nothing.

But again and again Mr. Pitkin makes the point that the biggest single item in the makings of happiness is good health.

And in its brilliant analyses of known and unknown persons who did or did not achieve happiness; and in its clear insight into the workings of mind, body and nerves, Professor Pitkin's book is distinctly worth while.

And, with due allowance, the reader will also pick up valuable bits of biography and history as well as psychology.

**THE HISTORY OF PSYCHOLOGY.** By W. B. Pillsbury (Professor of Psychology, University of Michigan). New York: W. W. Norton & Co., Inc. \$5.00.

**PROFESSOR PILLSBURY'S History of Psychology** is a valuable reference book for all who wish to become familiar with the whole field of Psychology. From Plato and Aristotle to John Broadus Watson and the Gestalt group, the wide vista is viewed, with sharp statement and comment, so that by the time the reader has reached the 315th page he may feel—if he has a fair memory—that he has acquired a real grasp of the vital facts of academic psychology.

Not the least interesting and valuable pages of the volume are those containing photographs of the individuals and groups referred to. Of rare interest is the reproduced photograph, taken in 1909 at Clark University, of the group summoned from many countries by President G. Stanley Hall. To students of Psychology it is a genuine



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